

Reaping the Benefits of Small Grain in Zimbabwe



Photo: DAI/Lifa Methie

Mr. and Mrs. Chidavarume are subsistence farmers growing millet in Zimbabwe's dry southern province of Masvingo.

"For a long time, we have wanted to grow small grains, which our forefathers used to grow, but our biggest problem was lack of seed. Now we have a better life because we have the seeds and we have the necessary extension services to enable us to successfully grow small grains."

- Mr. Chidavarume

In 2002, USAID launched a small grains project among subsistence farmers in semi-arid and drought-prone areas of Zimbabwe. Planting small, traditional grains such as sorghum and millet has reaped great results in improving rural household food security and incomes in Zimbabwe - now in its third consecutive year of food shortages. With USAID assistance, smallholder farmers participating in the program received in-kind loans of seed packages and agricultural extension services. Unlike corn, which requires regular water to thrive, small grains are drought resistant and do well with minimal inputs. Approximately 30,000 households are benefiting from improved food security, seed security and income-generating prospects. Usage of small grains has gone a long way in addressing household food security needs in some of Zimbabwe's underserved areas.

First Person